

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 174

EA 019 284

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TITLE Education Development: Dilemmas Facing Educational Planners in Africa.
PUB DATE Mar 87
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (Washington, DC, April 12-15, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Problems; Agricultural Education; Curriculum Development; Demography; *Educational Development; Educational Objectives; *Educational Planning; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Problems; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Industrial Education; Population Distribution
IDENTIFIERS *Africa

ABSTRACT

Despite the widely accepted belief that educational planning can contribute to an orderly development of education in Third World countries, very little has been done to identify the constraints and dilemmas that the planners in these countries face. This paper seeks to identify some of these dilemmas and solicit some debate on how some of these constraints can be overcome. The complexity of educational planning in Africa has increased due to increases in primary, secondary, and higher education enrollment, as well as an increase in teachers at all levels. Six dilemmas are discussed: (1) demography and the problems of rapid population growth and low population density; (2) inadequate financial resources, which, despite all efforts, have not kept up with enrollment increases; (3) goals and missions of education (formal education was originally oriented toward the needs of a colonial government and not local communities); (4) planning approaches to be used, involving questions of how to expand and make priorities for expansion; (5) curriculum offered, including questions of orientation toward agriculture or industry; and (6) conflict between quality and efficiency, involving the attempt to maintain high academic standards and improve efficiency at the same time. (WTH)

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EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT : DILEMMAS FACING

EDUCATIONAL PLANNERS IN AFRICA.

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and
International Education Society held in Washington, D.C. March
12 - 15, 1987.

By Correl Walter Samukelo Sukati.

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Education Development: Dilemmas Facing
Educational Planners in Africa.

I should begin by telling you that I am not an expert on educational planning in Africa, but with my limited exposure to it, eight years working in educational planning in Swaziland and two years working for the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA), I do claim to have some ideas about it. To start with, I should sound a word of caution. To us Africans, it is extremely difficult to take Africa as one, it is such a big continent, with over 50 countries (not to mention tribal groups and languages spoken), with certain blocks of countries that were colonized by the British, some by the French, some by the Portuguese, etc. and thus there is as much diversity as there are people. My discussion of this topic is therefore highly ambitious, to treat the diverse continent as one unity. But nonetheless, my observations are that there are a few trends that cut across all countries in the continent and give me justification to treat the continent as one, and these are the ones I hope to bring out in my presentation.

Despite the widely accepted belief that educational planning can contribute to an orderly development of education in Third World countries, very little has been done in identifying the constraints and dilemmas that the planners in these countries face, and very few suggestions on possible solutions for these have been forwarded. The idea that George Psacharopoulos put forward in his article on educational planning which appeared in Comparative

Education Review of November 1986, that education planning is only paid lip service in many developing countries, I believe, is misleading and simplistic in that it does not probe into what makes the actions not follow the lips, and I believe that some understanding of the dilemmas that the planners face will throw some light on why it is that some of what is said is not always pursued. This paper therefore seeks to identify some of these dilemmas that planners face, and thereby solicit some debate on how some of these constraints can be solved.

It is normal that when we hear about Africa in this part of the World, it is the continent's wildlife, its backwardness and problems faced that are mentioned, and we rarely hear about the tremendous achievements and progress that this continent has made. I am forced to deviate from this norm in that I have to start this paper by mentioning some of the achievements that have been made. This is necessary because most of the dilemmas faced in education planning today are partly the result of the bottlenecks created by the achievements brought about in part by planning. School enrolments have increased tremendously in all African countries, and for the period 1975-83 the annual average increase was 6.0% for Primary education, 10.6% for Secondary education, and 8.1% for Higher education. During the same period, the increase in the number of teachers was 7.2% for primary, 10.6% for secondary, and 10.1% for higher education. These yearly increases, which by the way were much larger than the annual average increase in the population, have resulted in significant increases in enrollment ratios at all levels. For primary education the gross enrollment ratios have increased from 43.5% in 1960 to 84.3% in 1985; for secondary education they increased from 5.2% in 1960 to

33.0% in 1985; and for higher education they increased from 0.7% in 1960 to 4.3% in 1985. These rates however vary widely from country to country, ranging from low 20's in Chad, Mali, Niger, Somalia, and Burkina Faso to a high of over 110% in countries like Gabon, Mauritius, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Swaziland for primary education. These are indeed gigantic achievements that Africa has attained in a mere 22 year period, and were achieved in part because of planning, and thus planning is not only paid lip service.

This big boom in enrolments, teachers and schools has increased the complexity of the educational planning process in Africa, and has resulted in many dilemmas education planners face today. Because of the severe time constraint, I will only talk about a few of the dilemmas faced, namely: (1) Demography (2) Finance (3) Goals of Education (4) Planning Approaches (5) Curriculum, and (6) Educational Quality and Efficiency.

1. Demographic Dilemma - the demographic dilemma centres around two demographic problems -- the rapid population growth and the low population density. Maybe, in time, the first problem will eliminate the second. Between 1970 and 1980, while the entire World population grew at an annual rate of 1.9%, the growth rate for Africa was 3.1%. Africa's population density is about 17 people per square kilometre, compared with a worldwide density of about 35. The rapid population growth rate creates problems for education as the increasing number of school age children, puts more pressure on existing educational resources. It also increases the dependency ratio, as more and more children have to be supported by the working adults. To me, it seems that the most important reasons behind these high population increases

are that children are a form of insurance for old age, and also contribute greatly in the family production process, and are thus great economic assets (and that is good), and so the more one has, the better he/she is. This poses a dilemma to education planners, how do you deal and cope with these large population increases when the rates of growth in the countries economies are much smaller than the population increases, and thus less and less funds available for each person? An interesting study done by Chernichovsky in Botswana in 1984 found that the more children a family had, the greater the level of participation in education by that particular family, thus showing the pressure the school systems receive as the population increases.

2. Dilemma of Inadequate Financial Resources - from the colonial times, African countries inherited a much more expensive formal education model compared to that of their indigenous systems of educating. Since the education model that was left by the colonial powers has received legitimacy, as the right one to educate the children, to accommodate more pupils into the school system has meant the expansion of this expensive model. This expense has put severe stress on the economies of many African countries, most of which are already spending a great deal of their financial resources on education. Added to the Government allocation to education are funds that individual local communities and individual beneficiaries pay for education in many of these countries. In addition to the local funds are grants and loans from bilateral and multilateral sources. Despite all these efforts however, the resource mobilization has not matched the enrolment increases and have left the Governments with the dilemma of whether to stop expansion (with the problem of what to do with those that currently do not have access to school;), or change the

model to a much cheaper one (which might be viewed as a dramatic lowering of quality). In practical terms, the problem becomes, do you follow the Tanzanian model and severely restrict secondary education (gross enrol. ratio 87% primary and 3% secondary), or do you follow the more liberal Kenyan model (gross enrol. ratio 100% primary and 19% secondary) and encourage communities to build their own schools through self-help (Harambee) --we still have no answers. Actually, how much privatization of education should we have? Should we let the neoclassical belief in the efficiency of a competitive market place rule? This also leads to the question of which is more evil, to deny a child a school seat (who knows the child denied a seat might be the Einstein of that country), or to attempt to give all children seats but deny them books and other needed school materials?

3. Goals and Missions of Education - when formal education started in many African countries, it was oriented towards serving the interests and needs of the colonial governments, and not the local communities. Because it covered so few people, its impact was not widely felt. After Independence, when it was expanded, very little changes were made on the system -- how could the Western Advisors and the Local Elites change the only system that they knew and were brought up with? As a result, with the expansion of the system, a hiatus has developed between what the system teaches and what the community expects of its educated children. The basic question being, should the school system prepare the child for a theoretical technological modern society, or should it prepare him for life in his rural, non-technological society? For example, in practical subjects, do you teach the child to use power driven tools

or hand tools? Either way, one interested party will complain. It seems clear that the current education system does not prepare the child to fit in his life-world and environment, and the massive drift of educated children from rural to urban areas is testimony to this. As a result, a lot of attention has been paid to innovations in education. But which goals do you work towards, and how to balance the preparation of the child for a technological society and for a non-technological one still remains a dilemma planners face. A UNESCO organized meeting of African education planners in 1980 noted these problems and agreed that these educational needs still had to be clarified by consulting the masses, in order to provide a better definition of the goals and objectives of education. But again how much of the masses' input can the planner use, particularly if most of them are illiterate and do not know the needs of the technological society?

4. Dilemma on Planning Approaches to Be Used - the question of how to expand, and how to make priorities for expansion still remains a dilemma. Aggregate social demand for education has increased tremendously (may-be the benefits are huge), and, do you expand your schooling opportunities according to this measure? And if you do, with so many people still uncovered by the school system, how do you cater for all the needs with the limited resources, and in particular because the most needy, the rural poor, cannot afford to provide their own education? Yes, economically it seems proper to say that you tie your education system's output to the country's manpower needs, and produce only the people necessary to fill the existing and expected slots in the country's economy. But difficult questions

arise: how do you determine accurately, and project the manpower requirements in a developing country? How do you select these people to fill the slots in the economy? And also very important, what do you do with the majority that have not been selected? For justifying expansion and setting priorities, it seems academic to look at the costs and benefits of the intervention you want to make, and then base your decision on the cost benefit analysis. But how well can this help you when many of the costs (particularly indirect costs) and the benefits cannot always be measured and quantified in the monetary terms required for cost benefit analysis? And also when they change over time? How does one deal with these dilemmas that the planner faces?

5. Curriculum Offered - In a symposium on the Future Development of Education in the Africa Region held in BREDIA in 1980, the issue of the relevance of education was hotly debated, and the following trends towards achieving such relevance were pointed out:

- a) Use of national languages in education.
- b) Introduction of productive work at school.
- c) Introduction of new subjects aiming at preserving and strengthening cultural identity.
- d) Use of locally designed and produced training materials.
- e) Development of more appropriate teacher training structures, contents and methods.

To me, the basic question still remains, do you offer children a curriculum geared to agriculture or to industry? Since very few industries exist in Africa, it looks like the reality is agriculture -- but since it is flout with problems of credit

facilities, agricultural inputs shortage, prices, land tenure systems, etc. it has turned to be a non profitable business, and appropriately many parents do not want their children to do agriculture. How do education planners deal with this dilemma?

6. Dilemma of Conflict in Quality and Efficiency -

defining efficiency to mean the incidence of a child repeating a grade or dropping out, there tends to be a conflict between quality and efficiency. Teachers, eager to improve quality and produce well educated pupils and have high academic standards have set some criteria for pupils to progress from one class to another, and if a child does not meet that set criteria, he is made to repeat. To planners on the other hand, the repeating child occupies a seat which could be used by another child, so his repeating denies another child a school seat and uses resources which could have been used for another child, and this is wastage. How do you reconcile the interests of the teachers (maintaining high academic standards) and those of the planners (to improve efficiency)?

In concluding, to me all these dilemmas of demography, finance, goals of education, planning approaches, curriculum, and quality and efficiency, plus some that I have not mentioned in this presentation, are a great challenge to us educators and researchers, to find some ways and means to deal with them, so that not only lip service is given to education planning, but the art is practised.

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